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DE RUEHLM #1688 3541143  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 201143Z DEC 07  
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7390  
INFO RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1670  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 8194

UNCLAS COLOMBO 001688

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS, G/TIP

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KCRM](#) [KWMN](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: GOVERNMENT HOLDS SUCCESSFUL TIP  
ROUNDTABLE

REF: A. STATE 168845

- [1](#)B. COLOMBO 1590
- [1](#)C. COLOMBO 1546
- [1](#)D. COLOMBO 1449
- [1](#)E. COLOMBO 1188

[1](#)1. On December 13, the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Empowerment hosted a four-hour roundtable discussion on trafficking in persons (TIP) with key stakeholders in the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL). The goal of the meeting was to share information and best practices, foster more effective coordination, and plan further collaboration to aggressively combat trafficking in persons. Senior officials from the Department of Immigration and Emigration, Ministry of Foreign Employment, Foreign Employment Bureau, Sri Lankan Police, the Police Higher Training Institute, and the Attorney General's office participated. In addition, the International Labor Organization; the International Organization for Migration; and several NGOs, including Lawyers for Human Rights and Development, attended the meeting as observers, as did DCM, Poloff, and a USAID officer. The event was covered by several local newspapers.

[1](#)2. Sumeda Jayasinghe, the Minister of Child Development and Women's Empowerment, called on the GSL and NGOs to coordinate their efforts to counter trafficking and extended the full support of the ministry to this effort. Secretary of the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Empowerment, Indrani Sugathadasa, stressed the urgent need for a coordinated national policy on trafficking in persons. The Government of Sri Lanka has a national policy to combat trafficking of children and the Foreign Employment Ministry is currently developing a national policy to curb illegal migration of workers. Sugathadasa emphasized, however, the importance of developing and implementing a national policy that addresses all forms of trafficking. Other recommendations that emerged from the meeting included increasing the number of labor welfare officers at foreign embassies, conducting more (and more aggressive) public awareness campaigns targeting populations that are most vulnerable to trafficking, and instituting a GSL working group on TIP to meet twice per month.

[1](#)3. While applauding the GSL's initiative to convene the roundtable and the call to constitute a GSL working group, DCM stressed that tangible results, including the prosecution and conviction of traffickers, were needed. He reviewed the key findings in the 2007 Trafficking in Persons Report on Sri Lanka and noted the importance of more effective interagency cooperation. He said that only concerted action by the GSL itself would lead to Sri Lanka graduating from the Tier Two Watch List. The DCM said the USG was prepared to support the GSL in its trafficking efforts and outlined two USG-funded

programs, one to support the development of a database identify and track trafficking cases and conduct police training and the other to strengthen prosecution and victim protection, that are being implemented by the International Organization of Migration.

14. COMMENT: This marks a welcome step forward by the Government. The discussion revealed both a sincere GSL desire to tackle the TIP problem in Sri Lanka and a lack of awareness of the scale and complexity of the challenges of human trafficking. The fact that remittances from foreign workers are a vital component of the Sri Lankan economy leads some GSL stakeholders to downplay the urgency of addressing trafficking concerns. Post appreciates G/TIP's funding support (ref A) in the areas of criminal prosecution and victims protection. We will continue to engage the GSL on the importance of interagency coordination and achieving concrete results.

BLAKE